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**THE GREAT POWERS AND THE WAR AGAINST COVID-19**

The SARS-CoV-2 otherwise known as the Wuhan virus or the COVID-19 is a contagious respiratory illness that can cause a fatal form of pneumonia. This illness first appeared in December 2019 in people living in Wuhan, China. Its cause is unknown and treatments are still being developed to combat its spread. By early 2020 it had spread throughout regions of China and had reached the United States and Europe, having been carried by travellers from affected regions. In March the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a pandemic. The COVID-19 is similar to SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) that surfaced in the Guangdong province in southern China in 2003 and was being characterized primarily by fever and respiratory symptoms. The virus was likewise highly contagious and was said to have been gotten from bats, another coronavirus epidemic was the MERS (Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome) that has the same symptoms and characteristics of this present virus.

The epicentre of the virus, Wuhan has been on lock down since January 23, restrictions have been loosened recently on the city and the citizens have been allowed to travel out of the region to other parts of China, international flights however, are still suspended to prevent a resurgence in the numbers of cases that have dwindled so far since the virus was first confirmed. The rest of the world still faces high number of cases compared to the number of confirmed cases in China recently with Italy being on the high end. Conspiracy theorists have suggested that the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is manmade, leaked from the Wuhan National Biosafety Laboratory that is in the area where the pandemic originated. Researchers with Scripps Research and other institutions around the globe published a study in the journal Nature Medicine debunking the theory after an analysis of the genome sequence of SARS-CoV-2.

“By comparing the available genome sequence data for known coronavirus strains, we can firmly determine that SARS-CoV-2 originated through natural processes,” said Kristian Andersen, an associate professor of immunology and microbiology at Scripps and corresponding author of the study. Some others have blamed the COVID-19 on the 5G broadband system, this is one of the most bizarre pieces of misinformation. There are several strains of this theory, ranging from the claims that 5G alters people’s immune systems to the idea that 5G changes people’s DNA, making them more susceptible to infection. Then there’s the idea that secret messages about 5G and coronavirus were hidden in the design of the new £20 note in the UK. These theories hold no water or scientific relevance and are probably made by those who have nothing better to say on the issue. Also, the virus has been confirmed to be natural owing to the fact that the MERS and SARS viruses that belong to the same coronavirus family have happened recently and they had the same symptoms. The MERS virus was said to have been contracted from live camels and the SARS virus is said to have come from the droppings of bats which makes no sense of the racist and xenophobic comments made by people that the virus was contracted from the eating habits of the Chinese people because they do not have the same occidental diet as most ‘civilised’ nations.

COVID-19 has had a lot of impacts globally despite the few months that it has existed, it has impacted all spheres particularly in the area of unemployment, millions of people (especially those who work in the informal sector) are unemployed as a result of the quarantine and social distancing policies put in place by governments to reduce the spread of the virus. Most states have placed serious penalties for citizens who default with some going as far as a jail term. There have also been economic impacts that has grown in the wake of the virus, in January 2020, some analysts estimated that the economic fallout of the epidemic on global growth could surpass that of the 2002–2004 SARS outbreak. One estimate from an expert at Washington University in St. Louis gave a $300+ billion impact on the world's supply chain that could last up to two years. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) reportedly "scrambled" after a steep decline in oil prices due to lower demand from China, the same can be said about the oil trade in the US as it has plummeted and there have been predictions that there could be an additional 10% drop in June of this year. Global stock markets fell on 24 February due to a significant rise in the number of COVID-19 outbreak, various U.S. stock indexes posted their sharpest falls since 2008, with the Dow falling 1,191 points (the largest one-day drop since the financial crisis of 2007–08) and all three major indexes ending the week down more than 10 per cent. Many consider an economic recession likely.

Tourism is one of the worst affected sectors due to travel bans, closing of public places including travel attractions, and advice of governments against travel. Numerous airlines have cancelled flights due to lower demand, and British regional airline Flybe collapsed, Virgin Australia is also facing bankruptcy. The cruise line industry was also hard hit. Several train stations and ferry ports have also been closed. The retail sector has been impacted globally, with reductions in store hours or temporary closures. Visits to retailers in Europe and Latin America declined by 40 per cent. North America and Middle East retailers saw a 50–60 per cent drop. This also resulted in a 33–43 per cent drop in foot traffic to shopping centres in March compared to February. Shopping mall operators around the world imposed additional measures, such increased sanitation, installation of thermal scanners to check the temperature of shoppers, and cancellation of events. According to a United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America estimate, the pandemic-induced recession could leave between 14 and 22 million more people in extreme poverty in Latin America than would have been in that situation without the pandemic.